Designing with Diverse Communities: Recommended Readings & Resources

At **Springpoint**, we support districts, charters, and networks to design and launch innovative high schools that meet the needs of all students and prepare them for college and career success. We believe that if all students are to be prepared for the demands of the 21st century, schools must be reimagined as adolescent learning ecosystems and designed for the actual students that they serve. An intentional school design process requires stakeholder input and ownership as a way to authentically leverage the collective expertise of students and communities.

Stakeholder engagement often starts with a community-based research process. School designers ask thoughtful questions and collect rich data alongside young people and their families as a way to deeply understand their assets and needs, while establishing a respectful and reciprocal relationship. Community-based research is particularly important if school designers are not part of the community with which they seek to design. Even if designers share similarities and life experiences with the community, they likely grew up in a world that is notably different than the one that today's students must navigate. Further, school design can create a power imbalance between educators and the community, especially since communities do not often have a say in how their young people are educated. Thoughtful identity work

and a healthy sensitivity to key nuances allow designers to engage in a more equity-focused school design process. This also helps to lay a foundation of reciprocity with communities that can extend beyond a school's launch.

In order for designers to engage in community-based work, we encourage them to partake in personal, reflective identity work before (and while) collaborating with various stakeholders such as community leaders, parents, and students themselves. To get started, we have collected a set of resources, tools, and readings—some practical and some theory-based—that can help designers as they begin to think about and engage in school design.

Recommended Readings
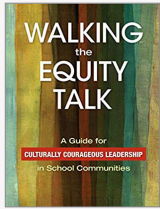
Walking the Equity Talk: A Guide for Culturally Courageous Leadership in School Communities

by John Robert Browne

The first chapter of this book is a strong introduction to the identity work in which school designers can engage. It lays out exercises, tools, and prompting questions to guide leaders to think about how their own identity—racial, cultural, ethnic, etc.—shapes their perspective and their work. While we offer chapter one as a useful starting point, we believe that the entire book can help educators who are engaging in this important work.
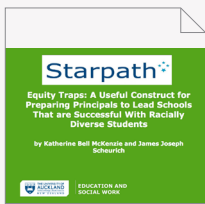
Equity Traps: A Useful Construct for Preparing Principals to Lead Schools That Are Successful With Racially Diverse Students

*by Kathryn Bell McKenzie and James Joseph Scheurich (Educational Administration Quarterly, 2004)*

A research-based guide for preparing principals, this publication aims to "help departments of educational administration develop school leaders who can create schools that are successful with children of color." The authors outline a new construct called *equity traps*, which are "ways of thinking or assumptions that prevent educators from believing that their students of color can be successful learners." Identifying and understanding equity traps is a tool that school leaders and school designers can use to accelerate the success of their students, especially in the development of equitable school models.
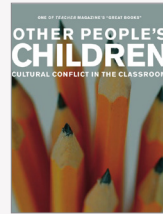
Other People's Children

by Lisa Delpit

In this collection of nine essays, Delpit explores the power imbalance of conventional education and offers examples and solutions for those interested in engaging traditionally marginalized communities more deeply and equitably. Educators can find guidance on identifying "prejudice, stereotypes, and cultural assumptions [that] breed ineffective education," as well as strategies to better understand their students through an authentic connection with families and communities. One noteworthy example (pages 179-182) recounts the author's task of helping one school "view its African-American parents as a resource and not a problem."
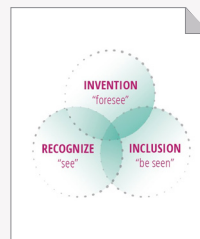
"Racism and Equity are Products of Design. They can be Redesigned."

by Caroline Hill, Michele Molitor, and Christine Ortiz

Laying out their foundational beliefs, equityXdesign's seminal publication unveils their framework, which seeks to marry racial equity work with design thinking in service of developing an anti-racist, equitable design process. The article outlines the organization's three central beliefs: "innovation's need for inclusion and intentional design, the indistinguishable relationship between the past and the present, and our moral imperative to live in the future we desire to create."
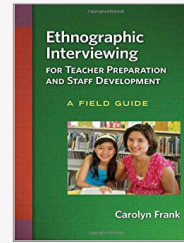
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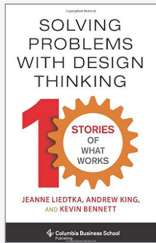
Solving Problems with Design Thinking: Chapter 10 Engaging the Citizens of Dublin

by Andrew King, Jeanne Liedtka, and Kevin Bennett

Ethnographic Interviewing For Teacher Preparations and Staff Development

by Carolyn Frank

How did a partnership between a government entity and a nonprofit organization engage Dubliners in a robust design process? In this chapter, the authors highlight interesting learnings about the ways in which a design process can "unlock the hidden talent and resources" in a given community, how tight deadlines can stir up energy, and how a process can overcome strict hierarchies that stifle individuals' contributions. It is a useful example of how a democratic process can drive design and decision making.

This concise, rich text is written by education professor Carolyn Frank for aspiring teachers and talks extensively about interviewing students and families. Of note are, chapter one and chapter three, which provide sample ethnographic questions that can help in the framing of community-based research question as well as thoughts and best practices for interviewing parents during home visits.

Tools & Additional Resources

Home Visit Planning Guide Sample

The Urban Assembly Bronx Academy of Letters opened in 2003 and serves 600 students in grades 6 through 12. The school's leadership team developed this home visit guide to help teachers navigate home visits and engage in productive, welcoming touch points with the community.

Liberatory Design Toolkit

From Stanford d.school's robust resource bank, this toolkit is grounded in the d.school's design thinking process and the National Equity Project's equity leadership development approach. It provides opportunities for designers to notice and reflect on the identities, experiences, and biases they bring to any design opportunity. Further, it helps designers begin to see the larger historical context of oppression and opportunity inherent in the design

process. This card deck includes sections on the Liberatory Design process, as well as mindsets and "Do Nows," plus activities to introduce designers to the framework. Additional tools from the d.school that can further support designers include:

- ⊗ A notice tool that can act as a starting point for designers to name and acknowledge their identities, values, emotions, biases, and power, thereby helping to develop identity self-awareness and social-emotional awareness before beginning the school design process.

- ⊗ A booklet—Empathy Techniques for Pursuing Educational Equity—that is part of a series that helps designers develop awareness of the biases they bring to design work. It provokes designers to notice their behaviors, the behaviors of others, and the outcomes of systemic oppression present in a design thinking approaches.

Teaching Tolerance Webinars

Teaching Tolerance offers several notable webinars on crucial equity topics, including perspectives on teaching race topics and ways to examine implicit bias as a driver of equity.

⊗ Equity Matters: Confronting Implicit Bias. Implicit biases—defined as the subconscious biases we all have that influence how we respond to others—are the focus of this webinar. To create equitable classrooms, educators must acknowledge their own biases and take steps to confront them. The webinar helps participants better understand what implicit bias is and how it can affect school climate. It provides strategies to help participants confront their own implicit biases, as well as direction on how to help students to do the same.

⊗ Let's Talk! Discussing Whiteness. Teaching Tolerance's final webinar in their four-part Let's Talk series delves into this provocative question: "why does whiteness fly beneath the race radar?" The series covers a range of critical topics, providing guidance on how to reflect on and define white privilege. Whiteness as a racial identity will be discussed with the understanding that acknowledging whiteness—and the privilege and power attached to it—is a necessary step in working toward racial justice.

While there is still much to be done to connect school designers and practitioners to valuable tools and resources, we hope that this roundup can be a helpful starting point. We sourced many of these materials from our staff, who have deep experience both working in schools and closely with practitioners. In addition to our staff, we'd like to thank our partners for helping us continue to learn and understand the intricacies and nuances of school design, education, and student-centered schooling.

We would like to extend a special thank you to Christine Ortiz, Caroline Hill, and Rachel Forsyth for speaking with us about this work and offering resources and ideas during the process. If you have any resources that you think would be valuable for school designers working in similar contexts, please reach out and share your ideas: info@springpointschools.org.

We will continue adding to and updating this resource as appropriate so that leaders and designers can access new research and tools that can drive their design work.

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Springpoint is a national nonprofit that partners with districts, charters, and networks to design and launch innovative high schools that meet the needs of all students, preparing them for college and career success. We provide school design and planning workshops, implementation supports, tools and resources, customized coaching, and learning experiences that help educators do school differently. Our support often begins with a student-centered, community-driven school design process, followed by a robust design cycle that asks practitioners to develop and codify school models that respond to the needs of their students.